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ABSTRACT PAINTINGS: Opening on Sunday, October 30, and continuing through the month of November, the Loan Galleries will be hung with a group of Abstract Paintings circulated by the American Abstract Artists. The paintings will be augmented by a small group of abstract sculptures.

"I will try to speak of the beauty of shapes, and I do not mean, as most people would think, the shapes of living figures or their imitation in paintings, but I mean straight lines and curves and the shapes made from them. These are not beautiful for any particular reason or purpose, as other things are, but are always by their nature beautiful and give pleasure of their own."

The above quoted paragraph is not from a recent book on abstract art, but is Socrates speaking in the "Philebus" of Plato. From this it may be seen that abstractions, namely works of art in which the artist has abandoned the imitation of natural appearances and makes a composition of abstract elements such as geometrical or amorphous shapes, is not a new departure. Today we are concerned with twentieth century productions in this field, but it is extraordinary to realize how aptly Socrates' description of almost 3000 years ago may be applied to the works to be seen in the November Loan Exhibition.

The trend towards abstraction in art has been almost inevitable. The passion for imitating nature which began in the early fifteenth century was perfected by the end of the fourteenth hundreds and for the past half millenium, it may be said that artists have merely been restating these aims with little contribution other than that of the Impressionists. It was perhaps the dictum of Cezanne that the fundamental forms of nature are the sphere, the cone, and the cylinder that directed the thoughts of artists to cubism. In this movement we see a disintegration of natural objects by dislocating the planes that compose them, sometimes the simultaneous presentation of different views or planes of an object in the same picture, a merging of these planes with the background, and finally an abandonment of the feeling of space or perspective and a reduction of everything to flat, unshaded cubistic forms. In this last expression, cubism became to all intents and purposes, abstract art.

The interest in abstract art, the desire to understand it and appreciate it, is growing in America. A number of exhibitions of it have been held, many monographs have been written on it, the Guggenheim Collection is composed entirely of some three hundred examples of non-objective painting, and now the newly formed society of American Abstract Artists is circulating this exhibition of fifty works by its members.

There is bound to be much interest in this loan exhibition. Some will be baffled by the lack of some familiar representation, the absence of an imitation of nature. Others will be intrigued and fascinated by the beauty, the rhythm, the suggestion, and the limitless appeal to the imagination of the simplified forms and the colours. These are purely subjective works, to be studied slowly and carefully, to act as a stimulation to one's imagination, or to be viewed merely as intricately conceived and carefully carried out decorations.

The group is especially varied and includes pure abstractions, some with a literary content, constructions, collages, and sculptures. "Composition" by Carl Holty recalls some obscure mathematical formula and is vibrant with its reds and pinks on green. "Papier Collé" by S. Frelinghuysen is a collage of odds and ends of sheets of music, newspaper clippings, and seems inspired by some of the work of the Frenchman Bracque.

"Pendulum" by Wildenberg is attractive through its sheer beauty of colours, a gamut of deep blues, mauve, yellow, green and coral and there is a definite feeling of the slow movement of the pendulum,



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suggested rather than expressed. From a point of view of colour, the most pleasing is perhaps "Composition" by Paul Kelper. It is a series of familiar solids, composed into an architectural whole and carried out in an interesting brush stroke in shades of brown, dusty pinks, yellow, and green.

The sculpture will confuse some, as it is more abstract than Archipenko, but it is meant to be viewed as a series of pleasing shapes, lines, planes, and masses. As sheer decoration, it is unexcelled.

Although not in the circulating exhibition, there will be included a group of paintings and sculptures by Frederick Kann of the Art Institute, lent through the courtesy of the artist himself. Mr. Kann is a member of the American Abstract Artists and his work is so significant a part of the new movement that the Gallery is honored to show them.

MASTERPIECE OF THE MONTH: For the month of November, the Masterpiece is a portrait by Paul Gauguin, entitled "Reverie". It is a new acquisition and is being shown for the first time. Formerly in the distinguished collection of the late Josef Stransky, who was for years the conductor of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, it is the most completely satisfying portrait by Gauguin in America. While less unique, perhaps, than the Archaic Greek Head featured last month, this portrait is equally significant in its field.

Gauguin is perhaps the most colourful of the French 19th century artists. The romantic story of his life, how he forsook a lucrative position as a broker to become a painter, finally abandoned his family and went to the South Seas, has often been told and at times its romanticism has tended to obscure his importance as an artist. Time has evaluated his contribution, his redirection of painting from the by-paths of Impressionism, his early interest in primitive art, and his part in the formation of the movement of Expressionism, certainly the greatest force in painting today.

"Reverie" was painted in Tahiti in 1891, during Gauguin's first stay there, and it dates from his finest period. It presents a native woman seated in a quaint rocking chair, her hands resting on her lap, her head bent slightly forward in meditation. She wears a simple, mother-hubbard type of gown which is a beautiful shade of rose. There is every reason to believe that it was Gauguin's native wife or "vahiné", Tehura, whom he mentions in Noa Noa as having seen for the first time at the village of Faone in a rose-coloured muslin gown. Later he speaks of "the gold of her face flooding my hut" and her calm, unspoiled beauty seems to do just that.

"Reverie" will rank as one of our greatest treasures and is sure to be one of the most popular paintings in the collection. With our great Cezanne and Van Gogh landscapes, it gives the Gallery an enviable representation of the three great Post-Impressionists.

WEDNESDAY EVENING LECTURE COURSE: On the evening of November 2, the lecture material will be based on the group of artists called the Giottesque, the followers of the great Giotto. They were active through the 14th century and include such well-known names as Bernado Daddi, Taddeo and Agnolo Gaddi, Orcagna, Spinello Aretino, and Starnina. The latter is represented in the permanent collection by a lovely Annunciation which is typical of the period in that it continues the work of Giotto, has an added sweetness and an increased interest in architecture and accessories.

Wednesday evening, November 9th, the Director will lecture on that most interesting phase of contemporary art, "Abstract Painting". A history of the movement will be given, its aims and its importance today. The lecture will be illustrated by the paintings in the November Loan Exhibition.

On the evening of November 16th, the Director will leave the field of Florentine painting momentarily and will consider that of the early Sienese School, namely the work of Duccio and his immediate followers. This is a school of great beauty of line as opposed to the monumentality of the work of Giotto and it seems almost possible to detect a definite Oriental influence. Siena was dedicated



to the Virgin and few schools have produced lovelier representations of her. The important panels of Simone Martini, the Lorenzetti, and Lippo Memmi will also be considered in this lecture.

There will be no lecture on November 23rd, the evening before Thanksgiving, but the Gallery will be open as usual. On Wednesday the 30th, the later Sienese artists, Sassetta, Sano di Pietro, Giovanni di Paolo, Sodoma, and Beccafumi will be discussed. At the end of the fifteenth century, the city of Siena was eclipsed by Florence and her importance as an individual school of painting ceased. The beauty of her rhythmic line, the sweetness of her Virgins and Saints have never been excelled and in these Siena made a most important contribution to Italian Painting.

JAPANESE PRINT EXHIBITIONS: For the month of November, the third in the series of Japanese Print exhibitions will be shown in Gallery XXIV. The present exhibition is designed to show the development of the print in the third phase of its history wherein it reaches the highest peak of its development in the work of Kiyonaga, Utamaro, and Sharaku. Using the techniques developed by their predecessors, these men each originated intensely individual styles. Kiyonaga and Utamaro made pictures of women while Sharaku confined himself to actors. Kiyonaga's ladies are tall, filled with elegant dignity. Utamaro's women are less formally drawn. During the time when these two artists were doing their best work they were close rivals. Sharaku's large portraits of actors are striking and bold, they stand in a class by themselves in all the history of Japanese prints. In the work of these three artists is to be found the very best of all the many thousands of Japanese prints made. After these three, the art of the print begins to decline.

YELLOWSTONE PARK PHOTOGRAPHS: Through the courtesy of the Northern Pacific Railway Company, Gallery XVI will be installed during the month of November with a group of photographs of Yellowstone National Park. These were taken by J. E. Haynes, the official photographer of the Park, and after they have been shown in the museums of the country, they will be returned to the National Park headquarters in Washington. Mr. Haynes is the son of the late Frank J. Haynes who first took photographs in Yellowstone and for whom Mount Haynes is named.

GALLERY LOANS: The Gallery is well represented in important loan exhibitions in other museums. Word has just been received from the East that the ninety odd Chinese Bronzes lent to the important exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum are by far the most outstanding contribution to the entire show. The Metropolitan has paid a definite compliment to us by using one of our Bronzes on the cover of its very fine and extensively illustrated catalogue of the exhibition.

Our "Penitent Magdalene" by El Greco is included in the exhibition of precursors of the modern movement with which the Memorial Art Gallery of Rochester, New York, is celebrating its 25th anniversary.

And speaking of publicity for the Gallery, both the Art News and the American Magazine of Art devoted full page spreads to our new Archaic Greek Head, using two views of this superbly beautiful acquisition.

FRIENDS OF ART: The Wednesday Morning Lectures for the Friends of Art have begun again and are given in the Gallery Library on the second and fourth Wednesdays at eleven A. M. On November 9th the Director will speak on the Loan Exhibition of Abstract Paintings and the Gauguin Masterpiece and the talk on November 23rd will be devoted to examples of early Textiles in the permanent collection. The activities of the Friends of Art are many and interesting and their contribution in building a collection of contemporary art is all important. Any News Letter readers who are interested in joining the society can obtain information from the Secretary of the Director.

RADIO BROADCASTS: Our Radio Broadcasts every Tuesday Evening at 9:15 P.M. over Station KCMO (1370 Kilocycles) are proving most interesting and instructive and the response of the radio public has been most gratifying. Tune in on them and hear the Gallery Commentator tell of the romantic story back of Gauguin's "Reverie"; the love of Gainsborough for our landscape "Repose", which caused him to keep



SUNDAY AFTERNOON CONCERTS: The Gallery is very happy to announce a series of concerts to be given on the first Sunday of each month by the Federal Concert Orchestra. This orchestra is a unit of the music project of the Works Progress Administration and is under the direction of Mr. Savino Rendina, who is well known among Kansas City musicians. The next concert will be at three-thirty o'clock on November 6th in the Atkins Auditorium.

On November 13th, the Gallery will present Miss Margaret Dietrich, in a piano recital; on November 20th Sigma Alpha Iota will give its monthly concert; and on November 27th the program will be given by young artists from the studios of Lois Black Hunt and Edna Forsyth.

JUNIOR EDUCATION ACTIVITIES:

Saturday Classes: The Saturday morning classes for children from seven to eighteen years of age are filled. Nine classes, including drawing, clay modeling, puppets, marionettes, advanced techniques, and general activities have enthusiastically started a full and interesting winter program. The Story Hour which precedes the class work each Saturday morning at ten o'clock in the Atkins Auditorium is the "If You Were King" series. Starting with Rameses II of Egypt, the story of some ruler who has fostered art in his or her country through the ages will be illustrated with slides or simple dramatizations.

Drawing for Fun: The story of "The Lost Queen of Egypt" by Lucille Morrison is the nucleus about which are centered the drawing activities of the group which meets at two o'clock every Saturday afternoon. Study of the Gallery's Egyptian collection and the story of the wife of Tutankhamen augments the crayon drawings which the children execute under the able leadership of Mrs. Dorothy Taylor Smith. Any visitor to the gallery is invited to join in Drawing for Fun on any Saturday.

Little Museum: The opening of the "Exhibition of Old Books for Children" is announced by Miss Beverly Templeton, Director, and the members of the Little Museum staff, on Saturday, October 29th, to continue through the month of November. The Little Museum staff is gratefully indebted to Miss Vera J. Prout and Miss Helen Wright, Mr. C. B. Kimberlev, Mrs. David C. Mackie, and Mr. George Dovel for the interesting old books from their fine collections. Friends of the Gallery are cordially invited to visit the Little Museum on the ground floor of the Atkins Wing.

C A L E N D A R

Tues., Nov. 1 - 9:15 - Broadcast - Station KCMO  
 Wed., " 2 - 8:00 - Auditorium - Lecture "The Giottesque" by  
 Paul Gardner  
 Sun., " 6 - 3:30 - Auditorium - Concert by Federal Concert  
 Orchestra  
 Tues., " 8 - 9:15 - Broadcast - Station KCMO  
 Wed., " 9 - 11:00 - Friends of Art Study Class - Library  
 8:00 - Auditorium - Lecture - "Abstract Painting"  
 Paul Gardner  
 Sun., " 13 - 3:30 - Auditorium - Piano Recital - Miss Margaret  
 Dietrich  
 Tues., " 15 - 9:15 - Broadcast - Station KCMO  
 Wed., " 16 - 8:00 - Auditorium - Lecture - "Early Sienese Paint-  
 ing" by Paul Gardner  
 Sun., " 20 - 3:30 - Auditorium - Concert by Tau Chapter of  
 Sigma Alpha Iota  
 Tues., " 22 - 9:15 - Broadcast - Station KCMO  
 Wed., " 23 - 11:00 - Library - Friends of Art Study Class  
 Wed., " 23 - No evening lecture - Gallery open 7 to 10 p.m.  
 Thurs., " 24 - Gallery Closed - Thanksgiving Day  
 Sun., " 27 - 4:00 - Auditorium - Concert by Studios of Lois  
 Black Hunt and Edna Forsythe  
 Tues., " 29 - 9:15 - Broadcast - Station KCMO  
 Wed., " 30 - 8:00 - Auditorium - Lectures "Later Sienese Paint-  
 ers" by Paul Gardner

William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art  
 Kansas City, Missouri

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